DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 222 494 SP 021 285

AUTHOR Grigsby, Greg
TITLE Persistent Problems and Promising Solutions in Inservice Education. Report of Selected REGI Project Directors.
INSTITUTION National Inservice Network, Bloomington, Ind.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (ED), Washington, DC. Div. of Personnel Preparation.
PUB DATE 82
NOTE 41p.

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Problems; *Administrator Attitudes; *Educational Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; Financial Support; *Inservice Teacher Education; Institutional Cooperation; Interprofessional Relationship; Organizational Effectiveness; *Problem Solving; *Teacher Education Programs; Teacher Workshops
IDENTIFIERS *National Inservice Network

ABSTRACT

This report summarizes and presents information from interviews with 22 National Inservice Network project directors. The purpose was to identify problems and solutions encountered in directing regular education inservice (REGI) projects. The projects were sponsored by institutions of higher education, state and local education agencies, and an intermediate educational unit. Part 1 of this report contains an analysis of the problem areas cited by the directors and an analysis of information gathered in the interviews. Because most of the problems were in the broad area of working relationships, part 2 presents descriptions of the problems in the subdivided areas of: (1) low priority and few resources; (2) resistance to program goals; (3) lack of direct administrative involvement and support; (4) poor intra-organizational relations; and (5) other problems (not in the area of working relationships). Information for each of the problems includes the respondent's number of years as director, type of sponsoring agency, types of personnel trained in the program, the problem, and its solution. (FG)

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PERSISTENT PROBLEMS AND PROMISING SOLUTIONS IN INSERVICE EDUCATION

Report of

Selected REGI Project Directors

Developed by

Greg Grigsby
Project Associate
National Inservice Network

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Leonard C. Burrello, Project Director
National Inservice Network
Indiana University
2853 East Tenth Street, Cottage L
Bloomington, Indiana 47405
(812) 335-2734

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

On behalf of the National Advisory Board of the National Inservice Network, we would like to extend special recognition to the twenty-two REGI project directors who shared their experiences to make this report possible.

Additionally, we want to thank Barbara Erwin and Kathy Byers of the NIN staff for their editorial assistance and Paula Griffith for her persistence in the pursuit of proper grammar while typing.

Leonard C. Burrello
Project Director
National Inservice Network

Greg Grigsby
Project Associate
National Inservice Network

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Introduction:

One of the major tasks of the National Inservice Network II (NIN) is to assist future directors and other interested personnel of inservice education projects to identify persistent problems and promising solutions encountered in directing inservice education projects. This task has been undertaken in an effort to extend the impact of the federal support of regular education inservice (REGI) projects over the past four years and to disseminate information on persistent problems and promising solutions experienced by past and current REGI directors to all future directors of such projects.

The NIN staff generated a list of twenty-two REGI project directors to be interviewed. Their selection was based on (1) length of time involved in the REGI effort, (2) representation from the various types of sponsoring agencies, and (3) accessibility for interviewing. Fifteen of the 22 interviews were conducted face-to-face during the National Inservice Network's Project Directors' Meeting in Washington, D.C. on February 16-18, 1982. The other seven were conducted by phone during March, 1982.

Summary of Interview Information:

Fourteen of the sponsoring agencies in this sample were institutions of higher education (IHE). Two of the sponsoring agencies were state education agencies (SEA), one was an intermediate educational unit (IEU), four were

local education agencies (LEA), and one fit into the category termed "Other" (see Table 1).

TABLE 1: Type of Sponsoring Agency (number of each in sample)

IHE	SEA	IEU	LEA	OTHER
14	2	1	4	1

Regular educators were trained in 18 of the 22 projects. Nine Projects trained special educators, eight trained administrators, three trained parents, and two trained vocational educators. Community agency personnel and counselors were trained within one project each (see Table 2).

TABLE 2: Role of Trainees (number of projects training in each category-- Some projects train people from a variety of roles so the sum is greater than the total number of projects.)

Reg Ed	Sp Ed	Admin	Parents	Voc Ed	Counselors	Community Agency Personnel
18	9	8	3	2	1	1

The persons interviewed have been project directors for an average of 3.7 years with a range from two to seven years (see Table 3).

TABLE 3: Number of years as project director

Years	2	3	4	5	6	7	
Frequency	4	7	6	3	1	1	$\bar{X}$ = 3.7 years

Sixteen of the directors described problems that fit into the broad classification of Lack of Optimal Working Relationships. This group of 16 projects, out of the total of 22 interviewed, was subdivided. Seven directors reported receiving low priority and/or few resources in terms of time and money from LEA administrators. Five directors indicated that they encountered resistance to the project goals. Two projects had difficulty in eliciting needed direct administrative involvement and support. Two directors reported that the primary problem was getting various administrators to openly collaborate. Thus, the problems encountered fell into the following categories:

1) Low priority and few resources;
2) Resistance;
3) Lack of administrative involvement;
4) Poor intra-organization relations; and
5) Other.

Six directors described the following different situations which are contained in the category "Other":

1) Lack of needs assessment data;
2) Lack of training materials;

3) Logistical problems with scheduling sessions;

4) Overburdened teachers;

5) Dearth of participant knowledge and skills; and

6) No major obstacles.

There were no distinct relationships between type of problem and type of sponsor or type of trainees.

Two common threads appeared within the seven projects for which low priority and few resources were reported. Actions and recommendations often involved negotiating with LEA administrators for more commitment or adapting to the prevailing conditions by adjusting the time, place, etc. of training sessions. Negotiations took various forms ranging from specific contracts between the LEA and the project to continual discussions with LEA administrators. Tactics for adapting the sessions included:

1) Reducing the number of days for the workshops;

2) Having summer workshops;

3) Taking the training closer to the participants;

4) Arranging for Resource Assistants (graduate students) to cover classes for the teachers;

5) Narrowing the target audience to include fewer buildings; and

6) Changing the target audience to include mostly supervisors.

Other activities which project directors used included:

1) Personal contacts within the system to sell the project;

2) Trying to protect resources by having the project funded through an IHE instead of an LEA; and

3) Shielding personnel from having to deal with crises instead of planning.

Five instances of resistance were reported. This resistance originated either from one key administrator or from the majority of the teachers. Recommendations were similar to previous ones and included the following:

1) Working out a collaborative agreement at the outset of the project to alleviate threats to persons' domains and to ensure teachers' participation on a voluntary basis;

2) Regular, frequent, structured meetings of key administrators;

3) Creation and utilization of an advisory board; and

4) Working with powerful teacher unions in developing the project.

Other actions and recommendations included providing aides for special educators; eliminating the expectation that special educators learn new consultation skills; starting with a small number of teachers and allowing information to spread by word-of-mouth; having sufficient knowledge about the change process; building in a process of sharing responsibility; working through the political process to get a required college level course on the handicapped; and alleviating false concerns through open, direct, frequent communication.

The following suggestions were provided by those directors who reported a lack of administrative involvement:

1) Create a steering committee which includes individuals from various levels of the school system and parents;

2) Negotiate LEA payment for certain aspects of the project;

3) Involve the administrators in planning the staff development;

4) Reinforce administrators for their contributions;

5) Help administrators see the value for themselves of their involvement;

6) Share evaluation data with administrators and at school board meetings; and

7) Keep administrators fully informed through memos and/or meetings.

Two directors related a problem in getting various administrators to work collaboratively. Solution strategies were based on the literature on organization development and planning for change. Such strategies included:

1) Building trust through working together;

2) Two-day retreats, termed "advances" arranged for the administrators;

3) Survey feedback used to identify issues and develop open communication;

4) Obtaining the support of the superintendents; and

5) Spending time talking with individual administrators in order to get them feeling good about what they were doing.

Individual Interview Information

The following descriptions, arranged by problem area, highlight the information gathered during the twenty-two interviews.

LOW PRIORITY AND FEW RESOURCES

Item A Years as project director: 4

Sponsor: IEU

Trainees: Regular educators and trainers

Problem:

The major obstacle for this project occurred during its first year. The challenge was to convince the LEA administrators in the 50 districts, this IEU's catchment area, that the training would be worthwhile, so that they would release their teachers for a five-day workshop. Understandably, administrators were initially reluctant to release teachers for an unproven project. One principal even called each of his teachers every night of the workshop to make sure something was being accomplished.

Actions:

To address this concern, letters were sent to the superintendents. These were followed by letters to the principals. Then the director met with LEA principals, curriculum directors, and special education directors that she knew personally. These persons were most effective in convincing other administrators within their districts. Other advice offered included: have training that is worthwhile; sell yourself before you sell your product; don't be pushy; and let administrators think that it's their idea to have the training.

Item B Years as project director: 5

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: Regular educators

Problem:

The primary concern for this project director was a lack of commitment from the individual in power, superintendent or principal, for more than one or two days per year for staff development. The school systems in this area had a history of working at a crisis level, habitually reacting to problems instead of planning in order to prevent them.

Actions:

To resolve this problem, a very definitive contract stating what the trainers would and would not do was negotiated at the outset. Explicitly included were (1) no one-shot workshops, and (2) the workshop must have teacher input into the decisions regarding its nature and content. As would be expected, not all schools contacting this project contracted to receive inservice training. However, for those systems which did accept the terms, the identified concern was totally alleviated.

Item C Years as project director: 2

Sponsor: LEA

Trainees: Regular educators

Problem:

The primary problem encountered during this project was lack of support from principals and other administrators in arranging time for inservice training for the teachers. The situation was due to a general lack of support for special education programs.

Actions:

To address this issue, the director was persistent in asking principals to determine times for staff development. This approach was effective with some principals. Additionally, at least one teacher from each school was involved in the 2-3 week summer program. These teachers were then encouraged to communicate the program's effectiveness to their principals. Continued negotiation with administrators for their commitment was viewed as necessary.

Item D Years as project director: 5

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: All school staff and parents

Problem:

The major problem experienced during this project was difficulty in arranging time for the teachers to get the training. This problem was primarily due to the low priority given to staff development by local school administrators. The LEAs suggested doing the inservice after school or on Saturdays, instead of providing release time during the teaching day.

Actions:

It was believed that training after school twice a month for 1½ hours per session was not as successful as desired. The most successful strategy was providing resource assistants (graduate students) to cover the classes of 6-8 teachers in one school building for a 4-hour block of time so they could attend an "intensive mini-workshop". To avoid similar problems, the project director recommended taking a lot of time to deal with administrators in order to sensitize them to the value of staff development, to involve them in the training, and to show them needs assessment data from their teachers.

Item E Years as project director: 2

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: Community agency people

Problem:

The major difficulty encountered in this project was that the local community agencies were reluctant to spend money on travel to send their staff members for the training. They were skeptical as to whether the training would really make a difference, and the trainees experienced some anxiety in becoming exposed to the unknown subject area of handicapped people.

Actions:

The strategy initiated to deal with this situation was to take the workshops to the trainees' own location starting in the second year of the project. This approach proved to be quite successful in getting more people involved in the training. The director of this project recommended that one maintain the flexibility to respond as quickly as possible to preceived problems.

Item F Years as project director: 6

Sponsor: SEA

Trainees: Regular educators and administrators

Problem:

The primary difficulty encountered during this project was providing teachers throughout the state with a week of release time in order to attend the training sessions. Impeding conditions were that (1) LEAs had to pay money for substitutes and (2) LEAs often wanted to utilize their inservice days for their own objectives.

Actions:

To address this problem, alterations were made in the timing, length, or target audience of the training sessions. Some sessions were conducted soon before or after the regular school year. Some were provided for a particular region within the state for a fewer number of days. Some workshops were specifically for local supervisors who then had the responsibility to pass the information on to teachers. The regional workshops were better accepted than those designed to pull teachers from throughout the state.

Item G Years as project director: 3

Sponsor: LEA

Trainees: Regular and special education

Problem:

The main problem for this project was the attitude of the administrators within the LEA. They were so used to reacting to crises that they could not justify the use of necessary time and resources for effective staff development.

Actions:

In an attempt to alleviate this problem, the director designed a second project to be funded through a university instead of the LEA. This step was necessary to retain control of resources for their intended uses. A second change was to limit the scope of the project to an area over which the director had more authority. These actions were successful in reducing pressure from LEA administrators to misappropriate funds, but there remained pressure on the director, an LEA employee, to devote too much time to crisis intervention.

The plan of this director and the recommendation to others encountering a similar situation is to design the project so that another individual, under the jurisdiction of the director, and thereby shielded from day-to-day crises, has the major responsibility for staff development. A second recommendation is to develop a support group of other project directors.

RESISTANCE

Item H Years as project director: 5

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: Regular educators

Problem:

The primary obstacle to the success of this project was covert resistance at the administrative level. The director of special education was opposed to the project, because it threatened special educators' domain. Another contributing factor reported by the project director was his own "newness, naivete, overzealousness".

Actions:

Several actions were taken to reduce the resistance. More constant and effective communication was arranged through weekly, structured meetings of the project director, director of special education, and principal. Special educators were provided teacher assistants, instead of being asked to gain expertise in observation and consultation. Demonstration classrooms were provided within the school building. These initiatives were crucial in turning the project around. An additional recommendation from the project director was to develop an initial collaborative agreement to insure the safety of various people's domains and to incorporate a needs identification by the internal staff.

Item I Years as project director: 4

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: Regular and special educators, administrators, and parents

Problem:

The trainers of this project encountered the problem of teachers resisting the training because it had been dictated to them by their school administrators. The principal's traditional role had been to determine that the teachers would have training and what the topic of that training would be.

Actions:

To alleviate the resistance, the director stressed to both principals and teachers that the teachers' presence was desired only if it was voluntary. There were still instances in which the principal required attendance; yet resistance became much less of an issue due to this verbalized commitment on the part of the trainers. In addition to negotiating voluntary participation, another recommended action in anticipation of teacher resistance is to start with small numbers of teachers and allow information to spread by word of mouth.

Item J Years as project director: 7

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: Regular educators

Problem:

The primary concern of this project was building relationships and gaining the confidence of the participants. This issue was especially critical since the project was designed for one particular school system. The project personnel went in with the attitude that resistance is a given; in fact, it's a sign of integrity.

Actions:

The most important action taken to build trust was to create and to work through an advisory board. This board consisted of regular educators, parents, principals, and specialized personnel, many of whom had been identified as opinion leaders. It was responsible for all final decisions on the project. A second important ingredient was that the project coordinator was based in the system and thus had constant contact with local personnel. Thorough needs assessment and complete feedback of results were done. In addition, much time was spent with individual principals in order to respond to their concerns. Several other recommendations were made: (1) The person running the project must have knowledge about the process of change; (2) Resistance is inevitable, so be patient and have a long-range perspective; (3) Don't become insistent on doing it your way--it must be a partnership; (4) Build in

a process of shared responsibility; and (5) Work with important persons in all levels, including parents. As a consequence of these actions, this project has been a success, but it has happened gradually and more in some school buildings than others. Community acceptance has been achieved.

Item K Years as project director: 4

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: Regular educators

Problem:

The major problem experienced during this project was that the majority of regular educators perceived no need to learn skills in teaching handicapped youngsters. Various factors contributed to this problem. Regular educators had a history of referring children who were having difficulties and of accepting no ownership in working with these children. Secondly, neither the LEAs nor the SEA emphasized the need for teachers to receive such training. Furthermore, teachers were concerned about spending their energies getting master's degrees.

Actions:

Several objectives were accomplished to overcome this problem. Through work with the state department, a college course about handicapped students became required for both a bachelor's and a master's degree. The director had extensive contact with the state's very influential teacher union in developing the project, thus receiving the union's endorsement. The support of superintendents and opinion leaders from the school boards was solicited. A new direction for the project includes providing video tapes on a wide range of topics regarding the handicapped. These are cablecast within the

city school system and broadcast state wide on PBS. An additional recommendation is to never start a project of this nature without spending a year investigating the political structure in order to determine how to deliver inservice training to teachers.

Item L Years as project director: 3

Sponsor: Other

Trainees: Administrators

Problem:

The major difficulty encountered during this project was a lack of acceptance of volunteers by the administrators and teachers. Historically, principals have had to coordinate the use of volunteers. Additionally, the volunteer role has been perceived as female and non-instructional. This, plus the idea that volunteers must be accepted into the school system, led to a feeling that they were intruders.

Actions:

As an integral part of this project, there was a volunteer coordinator who did the arranging, monitoring, and evaluation. Volunteers were trained in specific skills and held accountable for their work. Furthermore, the coordinator emphasized that the utilization of trained, competent volunteers would increase public awareness of the positive aspects of their schools. For a given system, this approach has greatly increased acceptance. But the same concern arises and must be addressed whenever becoming involved in a new school system.

The director stressed the importance of identifying, as early as possible, the power structure and sources of resistance within the system and including them in open discussions about their apprehensions. Presenting data on successes in other systems is also recommended.

LACK OF ADMINISTRATIVE INVOLVEMENT

Item M Years as project director: 3

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: Special educators and vocational educators

Problem:

The major problem experienced during this project was lack of administrative support. Administrators failed to follow through on what they had agreed to do and provided no moral support or reinforcement to teachers for their efforts related to the training.

Actions:

Actions were taken to increase the odds of reaching the goal of institutionalizing staff development. Meetings were held to emphasize to administrators the need for their support. Trainees developed a proposal for inservice training that was shared with administrators to demonstrate the teachers' competence. The teachers' evaluations of the training were also shared with the administrators.

Several additional recommendations were made: (1) Have the LEA pay money for certain things; (2) Involve the administrators in the planning; (3) Create a steering committee to include administrators, teachers, parents, representative from a local chapter of a professional organization or advocacy group (e.g., CEC), and the local person responsible for staff development; (4) Reinforce administrators for any positive efforts they make. Make their contributions public; and

(5) If the internal staff development person is threatened by your presence, forget about that LEA and put your energies someplace else.

Item N Years as project director: 4

Sponsor: LEA

Trainees: Regular and special educators

Problem:

The primary difficulty throughout this project was a lack of administrative support and involvement. The prevailing conditions contributing to this situation were declining enrollment and reduced administrative staff, leading to administrators being overloaded with other responsibilities.

Actions:

In response, the assistant principals were invited to participate in the training sessions. Their participation, or lack thereof, was then included in the narrative evaluations, which were turned in during school board meetings. Thorough memos about the training sessions were prepared to keep the administrators informed. The result was increased awareness and support by administrators, but there remained limited direct involvement and recognition of teachers' efforts. Recommended actions included: (1) Make a presentation to the school board; (2) Advertise and sell the project; (3) Share the evaluation data; (4) Have teachers give feedback regarding the workshops to their administrators; and (5) Help the administrators see the value to them of their involvement.

POOR INTRA-ORGANIZATION RELATIONS

Item O Years as project director: 2

Sponsor: LEA

Trainees: Administrators

Problem:

The most significant challenge encountered in this project was getting administrators from ten different school districts to feel free to openly share information and work together. Due to competition and territoriality, individual districts traditionally kept their problems to themselves.

Actions:

A variety of activities were utilized in order to build trust. Two-day sessions were arranged at the beach or in the mountains. During this time organization development techniques, personality profiles with feedback, and communication questionnaires were used. There were stress reduction times (play time) and business sessions. Virtually all the time was spent learning to work together. In addition, a half hour was set aside during the monthly consortium meetings specifically for sharing or collectively learning a skill to take back.

Additional recommendations given by the director were: (1) Persuade the superintendent and school board members to attend one-day meeting during the first six months of the project; (2) Include the superintendent on the decision-making body; and (3) Help the administrators feel good about what they're doing.

Item F Years as project director: 4

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: Regular educators and administrators

Problem:

The most significant obstacle for this project was getting the powerful LEA persons (in this case the superintendents, special education directors, curriculum directors, and principals) to recognize their responsibilities and common problems so they would be willing to jointly tackle them. Contributing factors to this problem were the separate power structures of special education and regular education coupled with a fear of exposing their weaknesses to each other.

Actions:

To deal with this situation, a variety of change strategies, adapted from the three models presented in The Planning of Change by Bennis, Benne, and Chin, were utilized. Solid contacts were established with superintendents based on the message that "this will improve the quality of instruction for all kids". The superintendents then set up a formal framework for staff development. Other influentials were educated regarding the content of the training and how it would improve teachers' skills. The common ground of "we want kids to improve" was established. This combination of strategies proved very successful. An additional recommendation was that the external intervener must assess and accept where the people are with respect to their attitudes and skills and then work from there.

OTHER

Item Q Years as project director: 4

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: Regular and special educators, administrators, and counselors.

Problem:

As this project began, an unanticipated situation became of paramount importance. Needs assessment data were totally lacking and the local school districts had no means to gather such data. The districts lacked both the motivation and the expertise to perform a needs assessment, probably stemming from a tradition of decision-making from the top of the organizational structures.

Actions:

The response to this predicament was to redesign the project to include needs assessment as a major component. As such, the trainers arranged for inservice for themselves, worked on methods of needs assessment, and began designing individualized needs assessments for school systems without attaching strings that there would be further involvement between the LEA and the university. This approach developed credibility and positive relationships.

Item R Years as project director: 3

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: Regular educators

Problem:

The most significant problem encountered during this project was locating training materials. At the time, there had been little need to train regular educators about handicapped students, and thus very few such training materials existed.

Actions:

The desire was to have high quality audio or video materials. To accomplish this, some materials were developed from scratch, some existing materials were modified, and commercial publishers were asked to send materials for review. In this latter case, some companies consented to have their materials modified. These actions have "made a dent in it". New needs are always arising, thus new materials continue to be necessary.

Several recommendations came forth as a result of this experience.

(1) Use a multiplier training model to meet the needs of greater numbers.

(2) Identify persons with expertise in the local system who have the time to do inservice.

(3) Utilize the University of Iowa's computer listing of materials.

(4) Don't attempt to develop your own mediated materials without excellent technical support.

Item S Years as project director: 3

Sponsor: SEA

Trainees: Regular and special educators, administrators, and parents.

Problem:

The primary obstacle for this project was scheduling and coordinating the many training sessions. This situation occurred because the project was designed to provide training throughout the state and because there was a decision not to limit the number of sites or number of topics for inservice.

Actions:

To combat this situation, there was a concerted effort to become more organized about the timeframe and to get information about the offerings out sooner. This solution allowed more time for word to spread among potential trainees and permitted requests for training to come in earlier. With more time to respond, significantly more people have signed up for training and the logistics have been worked out. In a similar situation, it would be possible to decide to limit the number of sites and/or topics available.

Item T Years as project director: 3

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: Regular educators

Problem:

The main threat to the success of this project was regular educators feeling overburdened with the number of special needs children within their classrooms. Teachers became resentful of handicapped children. Lack of funds and resources contributed to this problem.

Actions:

To address this concern, consultants and resource room teachers sensitized the regular educators to the needs of handicapped children and the reasons for the scarcity of resources. Generally, communication between regular and special educators needed to be increased and improved. The results were that regular educators have been considerably more willing to have handicapped students in their classes.

Item U Years as project director: 2

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: Regular, special, and vocational educators

Problem:

The main problem described by this project director was the lack of the potential trainees' knowledge regarding the capacity of handicapped individuals to attain the skills necessary for employment. This, of course, was the reason for developing an inservice training project to begin with. The educators had had little opportunity to gain this knowledge, and responsibility for vocational education had been fragmented among several state agencies.

Actions:

The project addressed this issue. Along with providing inservice to the trainees and workshops for the handicapped clients, an integral part of the project was to develop an interagency agreement determining specifically which agency would provide which service. Based on the experience of this project, the director recommended several activities to enhance success: 1) Build in incentives and release time for the trainees' participation; 2) The agencies and consumer groups need to do pre-grant planning; 3) Establish teams to plan each training component; 4) Evaluate each activity before the next one is developed; and 5) Use local training sites. An advantage of this project was that members of the project staff served on various consumer and state agency advisory committees.

Item V Years as project director: 3

Sponsor: IHE

Trainees: Regular and special educators

This director related that there had been no significant obstacle to success for her project. Key factors that prevented potential problems included early careful planning, good conceptualization, a history of positive relations between university and public school personnel, and a small staff with well-defined roles and good lines of communication. The project director did indicate a desire for a better instrument for assessing trainee attitudes.